

AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION MEETING
May 12, 2009
First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall

Minutes

Members Present: Jaime Tidlund, Pat Wagner, Linda Hess, Ruth Hazzard, Wm Levine, Sally Fitz, Touria Eaton,
Staff Members Present: David Ziomek, Diana Stein
Non-Members Present: Sheila Rainford, Ellen Bokina, Mona Naimark, Jeremy Barker-Plotkin, Epi Bodhi

Ruth spoke to new members about reviewing the town meeting charge, and the Agricultural Commission's responsibilities

The minutes from 4/14 and 4/29 were reviewed and approved with minor changes.

Wm Levine was nominated and elected vice chair of the Agricultural Commission.

A discussion took place regarding issues between the farmers market and the board of health. Jeremy Barker-Plotkin spoke regarding some complaints from farmers. There was some miss communication as to whether or not vendors selling eggs needed permits. Board of Health said they could shut down vendors because of the egg issues, farmers went to find information from the state about being certified and were told that there is no such certification.

Some current issues farmers are facing are the \$100.00 fee charged to farmers who sell processed food. There is an issue with a possible double fee paid by farmers, they are paying a fee to process the food, and than a fee to sell it. There have been two markets and several Board of Health members at each one, farmers want to know why there is such a presence, restaurants and grocery stores don't even have to go through this.

Chang farm was made to leave the market one-week because their bean sprouts were not refrigerated. Farmers feel Board of Health should have a process they go through where one item gets pulled from the shelf, not the entire stand.

The farmer's market committee meets during the winter; there are seven members on the committee and about twenty-five vendors at the market. Max Britenicker is a paid manager of the market, who handles day to day issues like parking spots and illegal parking, as well as anything promotional.

Ellen Bokina from the Board of Health discussed the new policies from the food protection program, about how food can be kept out and healthy, there was a training held by the state for inspectors to attend. There was discussion about "potentially hazardous" foods like processed foods or foods that need to be kept either hot or cold. Make sure good is kept off the ground; eggs need to be kept under 45°.

Farmers want to know why they need to be inspected every week. What is the \$100.00 fee for? Can the fee go to benefit the market, maybe supply ice or coolers or a hand washing station? A meeting needs to be set up between the Board of Health and the market committee to discuss issues and work things out.

A brief talk about the Farm Festival took place. Jeremy mentioned it was being held on the same day as the Garlic festival. Nothing else major was reported. There will be another meeting held on June 12, 2009 at 12:00 PM at the Harp.

Ruth let everyone know that Larry Shaffer sent out letters to realtors asking them to let people know if they buy a house near a farm they need to be aware of the Right-to-Farm Bylaw in town.

Approved at the September 8, 2009 Agricultural Commission meeting.

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There was also a letter sent to other boards in town asking them to keep the Agricultural Commission up to date on any and all agricultural related issues that may come before them, so the Agricultural Commission has a chance to weigh in.

Pat mentioned the Amherst 250th parade is looking for people to join the parade, and also the Hampshire County Farm Bureau is looking for produce donations to go on a float for the Hadley 350th parade with all the donations being brought to Not Bread Alone and the Survival Center.